

WHY WAS THE COMMISSION CREATED?

The Commission was established as part of the final court order issued by Federal Chief Judge Joseph Tauro in May 1993, ending a 20 year-old class action lawsuit against the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and specifically the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR).

In order to continue the progress made under the court's jurisdiction and to demonstrate the Commonwealth's commitment to quality services for all its citizens with mental retardation, the Governor's Commission was created.

The Commission is an independent citizen oversight body consisting of 13 members appointed by the Governor for a term of three years.

The third three year term of the Commission began in May 2001.

The Commission's purpose, scope and structure is described in **Executive Order #429**, signed May 10, 2001.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Commission shall be:

- ◆ To examine the quality and comprehensiveness of the Commonwealth's program of services designed to address the wide variety of needs of people with mental retardation.
- ◆ To discuss and resolve systemic disputes raised by individuals with mental retardation, their families, or their guardians, for which no other forum exists, or which have not been adequately resolved by existing avenues of redress.
- ◆ To provide a forum for review of public policy in the area of mental retardation.
- ◆ To inform the public, as well as those at the highest levels of state government of how the commonwealth can improve its services to citizens with mental retardation.
- ◆ To work cooperatively with the Department of Mental Retardation in connection with its mission to support people with mental retardation.
- ◆ To support and review implementation of the recommendations of the Commission made pursuant to its responsibilities.

POWERS AND DUTIES

The Commission is charged with ensuring the Commonwealth's commitment to quality services for all citizens with mental retardation. The commission is able to meet its mandate:

- ◆ By organizing commission activities to reflect specific priorities, including the waiting list, inappropriate use of nursing homes, quality care for people with significant healthcare needs, innovative funding strategies, and quality enhancement.
- ◆ By identifying and analyzing information on a variety of aspects of the service system in Massachusetts through site visits; meeting with individuals with mental retardation, their families, advocates, service providers and DMR staff.
- ◆ By preparing reports that address specific topics relevant to persons with mental retardation and their families.
- ◆ By holding public hearings or other educational forums on selected issues.
- ◆ By investigating complaints.

HOW CAN I COMMUNICATE WITH THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON MENTAL RETARDATION?

- ✓ Attend monthly meetings;
- ✓ Phone, write or e-mail the Commission Office;
- ✓ Speak with an individual on the Commission.

HOW DO I FILE A COMPLAINT?

One aspect of the Commission's work is the complaint process. While the Commission is unable to act on complaints that have existing mechanisms for resolution, the Commission is permitted to resolve systemic disputes where no mechanism exists or that have not been resolved adequately through existing mechanisms.

You can file a complaint by either sending a letter or calling the Commission Office. When you call or write, you will be asked to identify what actions you have taken to attempt resolution. Your complaint will be researched, and when all the information is received, the Commission staff will take action if it is indicated.

Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation
Two Boylston Street, Fourth Floor
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON MENTAL RETARDATION



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